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Safeguarding Civilization

—Deuteronomy 6: 6-7

The Opening Sermon of the

Conference on Christian Education

at

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By

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"THE RACE MOVES FORWARD ON
THE FEET OF LITTLE CHILDREN."

Rev. D. Clay Lilly, D. D.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN MAN'S LIFE IS HIS RELIGION; AND THE TIME TO ENTHRONE RELIGION IN A LIFE IS DURING THE YEARS OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH."

Safeguarding Civilization

These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.—Deuteronomy 6: 6-7.

A child today, a citizen tomorrow. Under the influence of others today, influencing others tomorrow. Our liability now, our asset afterward. In such terms as these do we speak of childhood and youth.

The one supreme treasure of civilization is its youth. The one surpassing value of a nation is the character of its youth. The one essential process for the mind is education. The one essential need of the whole personality is religion.

Our Theme is: *Give Religion its Rightful Place in All Education.*

Religion is one of life's great universals. It has proven itself to be both universal and perpetual. It is a major concern for all mankind. Put it into every school year of every child and youth.

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Our educational task is: To train the growing personality for its largest possible life.

Our educational force: In public schools there are over 750,000 teachers. Over 22,500,000 pupils. Over $1,000,000,000 annual expenditure. In public high schools there are over 100,000 teachers. Over 2,250,000 pupils. Over $1,000,000,000 invested in buildings and equipment. In 1910 the high school population was equal to one per cent of our total population. In 1922 the high school population was equal to

two per cent of our total population. It is mounting higher every year.

Our Educational Theory

Our Educational Theory is an offshoot of a political theory, viz: The separation of church and state. To keep the hand of ecclesiastical power out of the state's business, to keep the hand of political power off of the church's work; this is our national ideal.

This is good. It is the lesson taught us by centuries of trouble brought about by either one of these powers attempting to control the work of the other. The separation of church and state is a valuable achievement of the American people. Its importance can hardly be over-estimated.

An Unfortunate Deduction

But from this proposition we have deduced a most unfortunate corollary, viz: the separation of education and religion. This is due, of course, to the fact that education is so largely in the hands of the state, and religion under the care of the church. But we are beginning to see the bad effects of education separated from religion, and very many thoughtful people today are beginning to demand that religion shall have a place in education.

One of the state's purposes in education is to make good citizens and this is nothing other than to make good men and women. Surely no one would expect to do this without the aid of religion.

Four Great Influences

The four great influences that determine character are the home, the church, the school, and society—using this last term in

its widest sense. The school must have its part in religious training. Does the separation of church and state mean the divorce of education and religion? Does it not rather lay an added necessity that education shall be religious?

Education is the solid masonry of civilization. Our institutions and our ideals would perish but for the constant process of education. The same is true of morality and religion.

Our Educational Shortcomings

Our educational shortcomings are evident from the lack of religion, the difficulties in morals and the increase of youthful criminals. Our educational output is more and more unsatisfactory. We and our children manifest a lack of real training for life. We and they are pleasure-loving, irreverent, selfish, disobedient, lawless.

To have religion in education is as much a right of a growing personality as to have bread in the diet is the right of a growing body.

The forces which are responsible for what a child is taught have no more right to neglect his religious nature than they have to starve his physical nature.

Our Educational Awakening

There is an educational awakening apparent in the church, the campus, the state, and the forces of welfare and reform.

The churches are alarmed, and the churches are beginning work, but the churches are divided in purpose, thought, and organization.

Our Educational Transition

Our educational transition is just ahead of us. There is more religious instruction in colleges and universities today than ten years ago and there is more being added each year. Some of you who are here today may live to see the happy day when religion has been enthroned in all the educational world.

Objectives of Education and Religion

What is Education? Education is the development and training of personality. It deals with both the quantity and quality of life. One of its high aims is the production of fine character. It deals with knowledge, with culture, with ideals, with visions, with self mastery, with investment of life.

Without attempting a definition of religion, we may name some of its elements. Like education, it deals with the development and training of personality. It deals with both the quantity and quality of life. One of its high aims is the production of fine character. It deals with knowledge, with culture, with ideals, with visions, with self mastery, with investment of life. And while this is not the whole of religion, it is clear at once that these two important parts of life overlap in very large measure. Their aims are in part identical. The school and the church are both dealing with the same personality, and at the same time, and at the plastic age. The school can powerfully supplement the work of the church.

What Can the School Deal With?

A school is not simply a place for training intellect. We have come to see clearly

that the school must deal with the whole personality. It must develop and train the emotional nature, the intellectual nature, the moral nature, and the religious nature.

The School and the Emotional Life of Pupils

The school deals with the emotional life of the pupil at every period of childhood and youth. During the years from six to twenty-one every kind of vital process is taking place. The school must deal constantly with temperament and with all the passions of a human being.

Particularly in the important period of adolescence does the pupil need to have wise and careful guidance. It is a tremendous mistake to ignore religion in these years and to fail to give progressive religious education.

The School and the Reasoning Powers

The criticism is sometimes made that modern education neglects the reasoning process. Perhaps in our zeal for research, and the inductive method in general, we have neglected to teach our students to think.

Here is a fine field in which to retrieve this mistake in method. The rational nature is fond of thinking about religious questions. It would be a fine preparation for after life to have the student think earnestly on such great subjects as "A Rational Universe," "The Existence of God," "The Immortality of Souls," and "The Freedom of the Will." It would supply him with materials of thinking which would help him all through life.

The School and Conscience

There is nothing within us more readily enlisted for right conduct than that which we call conscience. It is the voice of God within us. It is the eternal Spirit ministering to the spirits of all mankind. It is a priceless possession. Yet it is far from perfect. It can be educated. It needs careful training. What can be thought of a system of education which does not definitely address itself to this high task?

Truth in Nature and in Revelation

The scriptures assert that God has revealed Himself in nature. This revelation so far as it goes is identical with that in the Bible, but it needs to be supplemented by the revelation contained in the Bible, and both these sources of truth have to be vitalized by the Holy Spirit of God before they are effective for the salvation of the soul.

The School and the Child's Religious Nature

The scriptures assert that God gave to man a spiritual nature. This nature is: 1. Educable. 2. Salvable.

A child does not have to be born again in order to have religious feeling or to be taught religion.

The message of nature and the message of scripture are mutually dependent.

Natural religion could not save us had we no revelation. Revelation could not reach us had we no natural religion.

Take the Calvinistic view of man's nature as guilty and helpless. Yet the religious nature is still seen to be there. It is not dependable, but it is his greatest asset. This

is his likeness to God, his chance for eternal life.

Natural religion is related to revealed religion as a foundation is related to the building it supports.

The school can minister to this great gift of God—the religious nature of man. The school can aid the church most powerfully in laying broad and strong this foundation. The church can then build on the great solid foundation of natural religion her temple of revealed religion. The two, working together, can develop and train that greatest gift of God, the religious, the spiritual nature of man.

What Can the School Teach of Religion?

The school cannot deal with the evangel or with sectarian theology. But it can deal with religion.

The school can teach: 1. Elements which we all accept. 2. Can use the great Common Denominators. 3. Can lay foundations. 4. Can add a spiritual element to the curriculum.

The School Can Teach Moral Standards

Religion has in it a great practical and moral element. This is kin to the other elements in it of a mystical, vital, and dynamic kind. It is one of the most definite and clearly indicated parts of religion. This moral element is also an essential of social life and of civic and political life. It therefore is a part of the duty of the school to teach children these moral foundation principles. Perhaps the way out of the moral maze, in which we seem to be lost, is in our whole vast educational force turning its

attention to the teaching of fundamental morality in the schools of the nation.

The School Can Teach Social Ideals

It would be a distinct contribution to our social welfare if in early life our children should be carefully taught the highest social ideals. It would enrich their thinking and give them new guides to conduct. They could be prepared for real citizenship by being taught the great lessons of Brotherhood, of maximum opportunity for everyone, the common good, social justice, industrial justice, civic justice, racial justice, international good will, and universal peace.

The School Can Teach Religious Values

No education is worthy the name which neglects such Religious Values as

Worship: with its kindred subjects of
Reverence,
Praise, and
Prayer.

Faith: including a sound philosophy of life, and giving
Peace and
Confidence in all life's experiences.

Hope: filling us with
Joy, and bringing us fresh courage in the day when our hearts fail us.

Love: including its cognate graces of
Patience, Gentleness, Goodness, Brotherhood, Generosity, Helpfulness, Devotion, Service, and Sacrifice.

Purity: together with
Honesty, Truthfulness, and Justice.

Self-denial: leading out to
Self mastery and self dedication.

The School Can Teach a Spiritual Interpretation of Nature

There is beauty and wonder everywhere in nature from the composition of the simplest cell to the most majestic scenery, or the overpowering distances of the galaxy.

The serious mind can find everywhere the evidences of wisdom, power, and love. There is discernment of this beauty on the part of the great prophets and poets of the Bible and also of the devout secular poets, such as Tennyson and Browning, Wordsworth, Bryant, Holmes, Lanier, and a host of others.

It would be a distinct blessing to our children to open their minds' eyes and to teach them to see for themselves these wondrous beauties.

The School Cannot Teach Spiritual Experience

But to the church this one great thing is left, experimental religion, spiritual experience, regeneration, and spiritual baptism.

The school cannot deal with religion in its vital, mystical, and dynamic aspects. The school cannot become the church. It cannot deal with the mystical elements of religion, and of course, there is no thought of its doing so,—in this sermon or by anyone anywhere.

The Need of Statesmanship

A state whose government cannot see the wisdom of teaching these four elemental things is badly in need of statesmen. An educational system whose teachers cannot effectively teach this much, needs a new set of teachers.

The state is the agent of society. Society is greater than the state.

Our total life is greater than any part of it. Humanity as organized into society has the right to say to the state: "We are not satisfied with the way you are doing our educational work. You must have a larger vision for it. Your output is below our standard specifications. You must cease to ignore and to neglect the religious nature of our children."

Society appoints the state to teach its children. But it does not thereby agree that the religious nature of the child shall be neglected. In return for apparently free tuition we do not accept a non-religious education.

The school is the agent of the state. It is her provision for order and safety. It is her provision for good citizenship. It is her hope for progress.

The State and Theism

The state, in her theory of organic law, is thoroughly committed to theism, i. e., to a general idea of religion. An atheistic state cannot survive. A non-religious educational system cannot safeguard the state and her institutions of liberty. It cannot maintain social progress.

Society must demand religion in education for its own protection. If we think of the deficiencies of our present plan, if we recall the rapid increase in crime among the young, if we remember the increase in delinquency among girls of high school age, if we are acquainted with the apparent immodesty prevalent among boys and girls, if we tabulate the statistics of our social impurity, if

we know of the irreverence and irreligion of men and youth of our day, we can be sure that we have not been doing for our children all they have needed as they passed through our schools, and if our people believe in God and in morality and religion as well as education, we should make this faith effective by teaching much of morality and many things about religion in the schools of our nation.

What Chance Has This Boy?

Under our present system a high school boy graduates in June. He has never had any very thorough religious education. In September he is on the campus of a college or university. He meets a great company of other boys much like himself as to religious training. He finds the upper classmen are also deficient in religious training, in religious conviction, and in religious habits. His text books are colorless as to faith or worship. The classroom is colorless. The campus is neutral. The atmosphere is largely non-religious. For the most part, religion and education are thought of as two incommensurables, if not indeed irreconcilables.

There is very little attendance at church among the students. He encounters all the problems of "Science and Religion." He runs on to all the rocks of modern psychology. He finds much materialism and some agnosticism, if not atheism, all around him. He has never been trained to think religiously and really knows very little about the whole great, vital subject. What will happen to his early faith? What chance has he of emerging from his four years'

course strengthened and built up in his religious life?

Is There Not a Better Way?

Let us keep in mind that the child has a religious nature and that this religious nature can be taught and trained and developed. Suppose that from the beginning of our educational work we had been teaching definite moral standards, high social ideals, imperishable religious values, and a spiritual interpretation of all nature and life. Suppose that the college or university faculty had been so taught and that the upper classmen had been so taught and that the boy himself had been taught these fine things. Suppose that all through his college course he should still be taught them in a series of studies that really ministered to his spiritual self, well, then, at any rate, the church would have a far better chance of holding this boy and the boy would have a more than fighting chance of holding on to his faith and of building on to it, so that when he leaves college, he is a mature man as to religion and ready for the service of God and of his fellowmen.

Can This be Done?

Can the church give her consent for the school to undertake this? She can. She uses a similar method herself. She instructs and trains this spiritual nature of the child previous to its regeneration. She knows that such education of the religious nature is a help to the child in its search for fuller spiritual experience. She does not ignore natural religion. She knows it has an important place in all our religious thinking.

She knows that this limited area of religion is almost identical with the corresponding area of education. She ought to know that it is not safe for either religion or education to fail to teach these great truths.

Also the state knows that she is failing in her effort to establish morality under her present plan. She is disturbed because she knows she is endangered. A contempt for religion and a rising tide of immorality presages the downfall of the state. This is the verdict of all history. The state has good reason to be disturbed. If she cannot find a better plan than the one she is using at present, she will fail. If she can find a plan that promises relief, she would better be prompt to use it.

A Multitude of Objections

There can be found a multitude of objections against such a plan as is outlined in this sermon. But these objections are really not against the proposition to give religion its rightful place in all education. They are only against the method by which it is proposed to do this. But we do not need to have a perfect method before we begin this work. We can develop our method out of our practical effort. Here, as everywhere, we can learn from experience. We can find out how to do this task by earnestly and prayerfully setting about the doing of it.

Important Testimony

The following statements are of immense value in our consideration of this subject:

Katherine Mansfield says:

"Since I came here, I have been very interested in the Bible. I have read the Bible

for hours on end. I feel so bitterly I should have known these writings. They ought to be part of my breathing."

President Calvin Coolidge said in a recent address:

"All of our learning and science, our culture, and our arts will be of little avail unless they are supported by high character. Unless there be honor, truth, and justice, unless our material resources are supported by moral and spiritual resources, there is no foundation for progress. A trained intelligence can do much, but there is no substitute for morality, character, and religious convictions. Unless these abide, American citizenship will be found unequal to its task."

And this, from Mr. Elihu Root, shows what the right kind of education may mean in the life of a great man:

"I wish to say now that I have during all these sixty years, and never more than during the latter part of that time, been conscious that my standard of values in life, the background against which I have unconsciously measured everything that has been going on about me, has been the background of the lives of the men who, sixty years ago, taught me on this Hill. No millionaires or monarchs, no public or private prizes of life have availed to displace the standard of values that grew into me then when I was a college man (at Hamilton)."

Unless we definitely put religion into education, our education will be non-religious, and our children will be non-religious, too. *Give religion its rightful place in all education.*

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